

Talking Points Little Hoover Commission

Broadcasters have a vital role in emergencies before, during and after each incident.

BEFORE

Stations have long been recognized as an attractive terrorist target and have had much tighter security than other businesses - but even these have been upgraded.

Educational stories and reports are constant about what to watch out for:

How to recognize harmful substances, Opening mail

What to expect at airports, etc.

Problem is always: "how do you inform people without terrorizing them?"

CBA works with stations through self-inspection program to ensure EAS is operational.

Energy crisis helped bring attention to backup generators in case of power disruption.

CBA encourages practicing with mock drills.

FCC has indicated through their inspections that system is working as designed.

DURING

Broadcasters and cable systems seem to be coordinating well in California.

Stations serve as primary means of information for citizens:

When asked how they first heard of the 9/11 attacks:

44% TV, 22% radio, 1%, Internet, 31% other people.

Recent survey showed:

87% of Americans got most of their information on attack from TV.

5% got it from radio.

3% on the Internet. When they went online, they went to television, radio and newspaper sites.

Closed Captioning for Deaf and Hard of Hearing:

As of August 29, 2000, stations are required to make local emergency information available to hearing impaired viewers through closed captioning or other text message alerts. Closed captioning cannot interfere with emergency information presented by other means.

Visual information on the emergency should include:

- Specific details regarding the areas that will be affected
- Evacuation orders
- Road closures
- Approved shelters
- Relief assistance
- Securing personal property
- Any details a broadcaster feels appropriate (wide discretion)

Visual Descriptions:

With greater use of graphics to assist the hearing impaired, stations are also aware that blind viewers cannot see information presented on the screen and must be careful to comprehensively describe any graphic they use. We are preparing seminars on these topics, as well as handling terrorism news coverage.

AFTER

Help law enforcement get messages out both during and after event:

Local radio and television broadcasters are in constant touch with local authorities looking for updates and information the public needs to know. Can always use better coordination and information as conflicting anthrax data is showing.

Guidance on what to show:

So far broadcasters have a good record of holding back, delaying and even canceling stories based upon government requests and journalistic standards.

Commercial Free:

In the four days following September 11th, most broadcasters went commercial free at a cost of almost \$400 million. This was the longest the major networks have been on air commercial free since the emergence of television. Such commercial sacrifices happen all the time at the local level.

Community Service:

Since the events of September 11th, broadcasters across California and the nation have helped to draw together Americans in the common goal of providing assistance to those in need. The unique power of radio and television is to reach and mobilize a mass audience. In the hours after the attacks, stations were already coordinating blood drives and establishing victims funds.

A few of the examples reported include:

~KABC-Los Angeles: Spearheaded two fund drives that raised over one million dollars, and distributed over 16,000 flags.

~KTXL-Fox40-Sacramento: Established the “Fox40 Disaster Relief Fund” and worked nationally to raise over \$7.5 million for relief.

~KGO-San Francisco: Produced and broadcast the three hour “City of San Francisco Day of Remembrance” services.

~KEZN-Palm Desert: Coordinated local blood drive and served as a clearinghouse for local information on fundraisers and relief assistance efforts.

~KEYT-Santa Barbara: Produced and broadcast a local telethon to raise funds for the American Red Cross.

~AGM-San Luis Obispo: Established a Firefighters/Police relief fund and broadcast from local banks accepting donations.

~KTVU-Oakland: Produced relief fund PSA’s and coordinated donations to groups assisting the victims in New York and Washington D.C.

FUTURE

Amber Program:

National program to recover abducted children with National Center for Missing and Exploited Children unveiled on October 24. So far this early warning system has been credited with saving the lives of 16 children. About 75% of the children kidnapped and murdered are dead within the first 3 hours of being taken.

We expect to be distributing a kit that includes a handbook and training video to stations before the end of the year. Participation is voluntary.

HR 8 was passed this year by the Assembly asking the Governor and the Office of Emergency Services to use the EAS and other warning systems for a statewide program.

Emergency response is almost exclusively a local art form not a science:

It requires constant attention as personnel in law enforcement and the media change. There are few local resources to coordinate these efforts. The problems we encounter are not equipment, but people who have preconceived and inaccurate notions about EAS. Some simply don’t see a need for it in their communities. Money to the OES to fund initiatives of ongoing education at the local level would help.

At a minimum, the OES should be exempt from any budget cuts and given more discretion. They perform exceptional work with the resources they have.

Our EAS is recognized as the best in the country. Jim Gabbert deserves tremendous credit as does the Office of Emergency Services.